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Why I Stayed

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“Why I Stayed” – A Program Oral Interpretation (Script)

Teaser:

“I married Eddie when I were seventeen ... thought I were pregnant, but it were a false alarm. Too late to back out though ... me mother tried to talk me out of it. Said I loved him ... Ha! that’s a laugh. I should have seen straight through him. I should have known...”

“There was not a hint of violence or control or anger in Connor at the beginning. I didn’t know that the first stage in any domestic violence relationship is to seduce and charm the victim.”

“I hit her. At the time it felt so sweet but she looked at me bitter and that made me bitter so I hit her. Look, look what you made me do you should have shut the hell up when I told you to.”

“He hit me. It shocked me sadly his kids are upstairs and he had that audacity. Why is this happening why is he mad at me?”

“He hit her? We heard the altercation just before the escalation we gathered information just to hear what they were saying. Then he hit her.”

“They say
These clever scientist folks,
That there is such a thing
As learned helplessness;
This has been me
Cowering
In the corner
Begging
With imploring eyes
For you to shut the door
And stop confronting me
With impossible choices”

Intro:

In 2014, author and domestic violence survivor Beverly Gooden started the “Why I Stayed” hashtag. “Why I Stayed” gave voice to many that have been silenced and shamed by the inverse focus of victim blaming. Despite this, victim blaming abounds. Sherry Hamby, professor of psychology suggests that the impulse to blame the victim is cultural - primarily influenced by the just-world fallacy. She explains that this bias allows many to avoid facing the reality that something just as unthinkable could happen to you - even if you do everything “right.” This reaction perpetuates domestic violence by empowering the abuser and reinforcing the complexities of leaving.

Using drama titled “Behind Closed Doors,” by Janet Shaw, Ted Talk, “Why domestic violence victims don’t leave” presented by Leslie Morgan Steiner, satire titled “James is Dead,” produced by Blue Seat Studios, and Poetry titled “Why I hit her” by Travis M. and the anonymous online poetry collection “Hidden Hurt.”

Why I Stayed - a program. Because we can no longer afford to let our fear contribute to others' terror.

Lead Up/Set Up:

“1. Hey, did you hear? James is dead!

2. What? Oh my god what happened?

1. Apparently somebody killed him at a party

2. Oh man, that sucks. I mean, what was he wearing though?

1. What?!

2. Well you know how he wears all those V-neck t shirts.

1. Yeah, but...

2. I'm just saying that if you don't want to get stabbed in the neck, consider wearing a turtleneck sweater or something.”

“I was 22. I had just graduated from Harvard College and I had a very big secret. I had this gun loaded with hollow-point bullets pointed at my head by the man who I thought was my soulmate, many, many times.”

“He likes a drink ... if there were a nip in the air, he'd try to drink it. That's how it's been for the last God knows how many years ... He isn't all bad, it's just that he treats me like somat he's fetched in on his shoes ... If it want for Thomas here, I think I'd have been put in a loony bin years ago.”

“I also didn't know that the second step is to isolate the victim. Now, Connor did not come home one day and announce, “You know, hey, all this Romeo and Juliet stuff has been great, but I need to move into the next phase where I isolate you and I abuse you" I had no idea I was walking headfirst into a carefully laid physical, financial and psychological trap.”

“2. Did he even blow the murder whistle that student life gave us?

1. No, I think it was in his coat. The murder happened so fast.

2. Pft! In his coat! Typical freshman move. I mean 1 in 5 college students get murdered. He should have been more careful.”

“Connor first physically attacked me when I was working on my computer and I got frustrated, and Connor used my anger as an excuse to put both of his hands around my neck and to squeeze so tightly that I could not breathe or scream. Five days later, the ten bruises on my neck had just faded, and I put on my mother's wedding dress, and I married him.”

“I suppose if truth be known, I'm miserable. Unhappy and miserable. I know what I ought to do ... leave him; but where would I go, and what would I do. I can't afford to run a house on what I earn...”

“2. So did they find out who did it? I mean assuming it was a murder and not some assisted suicide thing. Hey, maybe James really wanted this to happen.

1. No, he definitely didn't, and it was definitely Robert. Some people walked in on the murder, but they didn't think it was any of their business.

2. Robert, oh he's such a nice guy! He's definitely not a murderer. Poor Robert, really it's sad how many young people's lives are ruined just because they kill a few people in college.”

Climax:

“Why did I stay? The answer is easy. I didn't know he was abusing me. Even though he held those loaded guns to my head, pushed me down stairs, threatened to kill our dog, I never once thought of myself as a battered wife. Instead, I was a very strong woman in love with a deeply troubled man, and I was the only person on Earth who could help Connor face his demons.”

“Crazy? That is what you want me to think I am,
Telling me you meant no harm....and that you never will again.
The nights you tower over me just to make me feel
As if the blame and shame are mine-and my feelings are not real.”

“The other question everybody asks is, why doesn't she just leave Connor? We victims know something you usually don't: It's incredibly dangerous to leave an abuser. Over 70 percent of domestic violence murders happen after the victim has ended the relationship - the abuser has nothing left to lose.”

“Fast forward. I love my girl, but I hate myself. Working does not define , but there's no wealth, she's working two jobs and that ain't no help this ain't the life I pictured when I would paint myself.

Coming home from work and I ate myself so I stop by the bar and I drank myself. I get home it's only a quarter past twelve she's giving me hell I forgot to take out the trash it's another reason to yell. Tried to say babe chill my day's not going well. Took off my hat trying not to snap back told her to relax because I ain't trying to have that all of the sudden my eyes went black shut up *smack*she screamed and I had a flashback. I hit her. She ran for the door so it didn't stop there I shoved her to the floor and grabbed her by the hair when she looked in my eyes I saw her fear. She tried to fight back so I hit her harder. It made me more angry when I realized I'm my father so I hit her harder. Something in my own self hatred and I hit her harder. The love of my life died in my arms but what was worse she was carrying my daughter...”

Resolution:

“But you don't know that with each blow and hurt you have to give,
The more you build my silent nerve, and my will to live.
You think that you have won, I'm broken on the ground,
But you don't know the plans in place and strength that I have found.
Just know there will come a day, not far within my reach,
The only things to grip my soul are happiness and peace.”

“I was able to end my own crazy love story by breaking the silence. I'm still breaking the silence today. It's my way of helping other victims, and it's my final request of you. Talk about what you heard here. Abuse thrives only in silence. We need every one of you to understand the secrets of domestic violence. Show abuse the light of day by talking about it with your children, your coworkers, your friends and family. Recast survivors as wonderful, lovable people with full futures.”

“Close my eyes spread my wings and I will fly free
No more shame, pretend, cheap smiles and lies
Never again imprisoned, now and forever I'm holding the key
Your self-pity and fairy tales fall on deaf ears
Your stories and lies create no sympathy tears
One by one everyone is hearing the truth
At last I am standing tall
... We've got it all”

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